Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of C.I.A. Castro Plot

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WASHINGTON, March 9 — Two former key aides to the late Robert F. Kennedy say that he told them in 1967 that agents of the Central Intelligence Agency had contracted with the Mafia in an aborted plot to assassinate Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961.

Adam Walinsky and Peter B. Edelman, who were assistants to Mr. Kennedy when he was Attorney General and a Senator, said in interviews last week that Mr. Kennedy told them that he had played an active role in stopping the assassination attempt.

A high official of the C.I.A., informed of the Walinsky-Edelman account, said the agency would have "no comment."

Mr. Walinsky, now a lawyer in private practice in New York, said that Mr. Kennedy disclosed that he had received "assurances in writing" from the C.I.A. that the attempted assassination had been aborted. Those assurances came after Mr. Kennedy discussed the issue with high officials of the agency, Mr. Walinsky recalled the then-Senator saying.

"He told us that he had discovered that the C.I.A. had made a contract with the Mafia to hit Castro," Mr. Walinsky said.

The Walinsky-Edelman account was initially provided to The New York Times in separate off-the-record discussions in 1973 and restated Friday for direct attribution.

On March 3, 1967, Jack Anderson, the syndicated columnist, reported that the C.I.A. may have plotted Mr. Castro's assassination and depicted Mr. Kennedy as the official who "may have approved the operation." Mr. Anderson also cited what he termed persistent "rumors" to the effect that Mr. Castro may have become aware of the American plot and decided to retaliate by having President Kennedy assassinated in 1963. Because of that possibility, the columnist suggested, Senator Kennedy may have been blaming himself for the death of his brother.

The column, published at a time of strained relations between Senator Kennedy and President Johnson, "outraged" the Senator, Mr. Walinsky recalled, and led to the discussion of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia assassination attempt.

"I remember him saying,

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'blame myself?' Mr. Edelman recalled. "I didn't start it [the Castro assassination attempt]; I stopped it."

Mr. Edelman, now a vice president for policy at the university of Massachusetts, further quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying, "I found out that some people were going to try an attempt on Castro's life and I turned it off."

Mr. Edelman said that Mr. Kennedy had "mentioned the Mafia." Mr. Edelman said that the inference he had then drawn from the conversation was that "someone associated with the C.I.A. had done this, but not necessarily that it had been officially anctioned by the agency, whatever that means."

Clue Found in Las Vegas

Mr. Walinsky also recalled Mr. Kennedy as explaining in 1967 that he had learned of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia link while working as an organized crime investigator for a Senate committee in the late fifties.

"He was out in Las Vegas," Mr. Walinsky recalled Mr. Kennedy as saying, "and a mobster told him, 'you can't touch me. I've got immunity.' he said 'who gave you immunity?' and the mobster said 'C.I.A.'"

"He went back and he checked and sure enough it was true," Mr. Walinsky said. "They had made a deal with this guy.

Mr. Walinsky said that Mr. Kennedy did not say in his conversation in 1967 who had informed him of the alleged C.I.A.-Mafia ties. He also said that Mr. Kennedy apparently learned more about that relationship while serving at President Kennedy's request on a panel in 1961 that reviewed the C.I.A.'s planning and preparations for the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion.

Asked why Senator Kennedy did not try to make that information public, Mr. Walinsky said he could only speculate, but that he believed the Senator, who was assassinated while seeking the Democratic Presidential nomination, in 1968, planned to take some corrective action toward the C.I.A. if elected to the White House.

Briefing of Ford Reported

A number of news organizations have reported that President Ford was briefed late last year on C.I.A.-connected assassinations or assassination attempts. The White House has refused to comment.

Asked at a news conference last Thursday night what William E. Colby, director of Central Intelligence had told him about the allegations of assassination or assassination attempts on foreign leaders, Mr. Ford replied that he was "not in a position to give any factual account."

Mafia leaders have been linked to American intelligence efforts since World War II, when Charles Luciano allegedly aided the planning for the Allied invasion of Sicily.

A number of Mafia leaders had extensive gambling and syndicate holdings in Cuba dating to the late nineteen-thirties when Meyer Lansky opened his first casino in Havana. The Mafia also reportedly enjoyed a close relationship with Fulgencio Batista, the Cuban dictator whom Mr. Castro deposed.

After the Castro revolution in 1958, the gambling casinos and other activities were shut down by the Cuban Government and the Mafia allegedly worked closely with C.I.A. operatives in providing intelligence, planning and other help for the Bay of Pigs invasion, according to a number of Federal investigators.

In a book called "The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia," Alfred McCoy, then a Yale student, charged in 1972 that Corsican and American syndicate gangsters had become involved in the heroin trade from Laos, Burma and Thailand. He also wrote that such infor-

mation was well known to many officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and that they had done nothing to stop such activities.

High officials of the intelligence agency, including Mr. Colby and Cord Meyer, now the station chief in London, denied the allegation at the time.

Mr. McCoy quoted Edward Lansdale, a high-level C.I.A. operative in Southeast Asia, as telling him in 1971 that he had met with Corsican mobsters and informed them he would take a hands-off attitude toward them.

"We had some kind of truce," Mr. McCoy quoted Mr. Lansdale as saying.

Aid on Spying Reported

A number of past and present C.I.A. agents told The Times in interviews shortly after Mr. McCoy's allegations were published that agency officials repeatedly looked the other way in the nineteen-sixty's because the Southeast Asian drug trade was considered to be helpful to anti-Communist forces.

San Giancana, a Chicago rackets chief with long-time connections to Cuba, is believed by some investigators to have aided the C.I.A. in spying efforts against Mr. Castro.

In August, 1963, Sandy Smith, a crime reporter for The Chicago Sun-Times, quoted Justice Department sources as saying the C.I.A. had apparently helped Mr. Giancana spy on his then girlfriend, Phyllis McGuire, one of the singing McGuire sisters, sometime in 1961.

Mr. Smith, now a Time magazine reporter who is highly respected for his reporting on organized crime, wrote that Mr. Giancana had become concerned because a prominent night club singer was becoming too attentive to Miss McGuire and the C.I.A. apparently decided to help him confirm his suspicions.

An man describing himself as an "investigator" for a private detective agency in Florida was arrested by sheriff's police while prowling in Miss McGuire's hotel suite in Las Vegas. After persistent questioning, the detective agency told the police to get in touch with the C.I.A.

Explanation Lacking

The matter was apparently dropped without any formal charges being filed, but Mr. Smith wrote that neither the C.I.A. nor the detective agency ever offered the police an explantion of what the prowler had been doing in the hotel suite.

A former Justice Department official knowledgeable about such matters supported Mr. Smith's account in a recent interview with The Times. But he said that a file on the matter, which also showed that a wiretap had been involved, had been removed by a Nixon Administration appointee from the department's organized crime division.

The alleged Giancana-C.I.A. link became of concern to the Nixon Administration in the late nineteen-sixties, the source said, because there was a mistaken initial belief that the wiretap on Miss McGuire's room had been authorized by Robert Kennedy when he was Attorney General.

In a series of interviews late last year, a former undercover agent for the C.I.A. in New York City alleged that he and other agents "had some dealings" with the mafia.

The former C.I.A. man, who told of monitoring the activities of radicals and other dissidents in the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies and whose knowledge of the C.I.A. seemed extensive, said that the Mafia was relied upon for exchanges of information and also to assault targets seected by the C.I.A.

The former C.I.A. man refused to name any such victims or to permit his name to be used. In a recent statement to a House subcommittee, Mr. Colby said that he had been unable to identify the man and, therefore, believed him to be "a fabricator."

A number of high-ranking present and former Justice Department officials with close involvement in organized crime activities also expressed the belief in interviews last week that the full story of alleged C.I.A. involvement with the Mafia was not known.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy in 1963 with Adam Walinsky, right, and Peter B. Edelman, rear. They were then assistants to Mr. Kennedy. They revealed details on alleged plot against Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba.